Analyzing the Lexico-semantic Features in James Joyce's Ulysses

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Summary:

Stylistics' primary interest is to examine literary texts from a linguistic angle. It highlights the formal characteristics in a text using certain systematic models. The present paper fell into the Modern English Literature. It threw light on the lexico-semantic features in James Joyce's novel, Ulysses. This inquiry aimed to identify the main lexico-semantic features and to interpret Joyce's motives behind using them. The two researchers used Leech and Short's model of analysis. Careful reading of the novel revealed Joyce's varied applications of general lexicon such as colloquialism, nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs that construct unique meanings in the text and evoke novel's themes. Analyzing the semantic level showed Joyce's employment of tropes such as metaphor, metonymy and irony along with neologism.

Keywords: stylistics, lexico-semantic features, colloquialism, metaphor, metonymy, irony, neologism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modernism is a literary, artistic and cultural movement, historically spanning from the late 19th century; its exact point of departure is often arguable, yet most historians agreed on the 1860's, and it came to fruition around the Second World War. Modernism sprang out of the rapidly changing technology rampant by the end of the 19th century and resulted out of the theories of some scholars like Freud, Marx, Darwin and Nietzsche. At its beginning, modernism had a major impact on art particularly paintings; Cubism and Impressionism were its product. Progressively, its representative figures such as Ezra Pound, Filippo Marinetti and James Joyce interpreted developments of the visual arts into outstanding literary works (Milne, 2009).

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The present paper tackles one of the seminal works of the Modernist writer James Joyce, *Ulysses*. The latter is a chief contribution to the development of the 20th century modernist literature. Joyce waters his novel's episodes and its basic storyline from the Homeric Epic.

The present study is stylistic.Stylistics has gained momentum since it allows readers to analyze texts in an objective way as opposed to intuitions upon which literary criticism relies. Even if they differ in the way and principles of analysis, stylistics and literary criticism operate on a complementary basis.

The present work treats the lexico-semantic level by examining its features that are words and their meanings. The novel exhibits the figurative use of language as a distinctive stylistic feature to help readers form mental images to decode the underlying meanings in a more explicit way. Stylistics also has to do with the emotional response readers experience when reading a given idea expressed figuratively.

2. Literature Review

Stylistics represents an amalgamation of linguistics and literary criticism. Its ultimate aim is to highlight the linguistic features of a text showing how this can help in interpreting and deducing meanings. The term 'style' carries a multiplicity of definitions and connotations, which are mostly controversial, debatable, and have conflicting views ranging from considering it as the moulding of the message, viewing it as a substantial ingredient of meaning or associating it to the author. Many linguists and stylisticians suggested different definitions in order to come up with a unifying and satisfactory view to the term 'style' as related to literature.

As a point of departure, it is felt necessary to illuminate the meaning of the term "style" . Wales (2011) offered the simplest definition to style as " referring to the distinctive perceived manner of expression in writing and speaking" (p.397). This definition implies that style is the way in which people express themselves be it written or oral, and it is modified as distinctive because people do not perform language in the same way; everyone has his own particularity; hence, it varies from one person to another.

 In this respect, Leech and Short (2007) pointed out that style indicates the way in which language is used in a given context by a given person for a given purpose. This definition provides an extra piece of information that is 'the context'. Context is a key component since it identifies the way of expression. For example, the doctor's language with his patient is quite different from the language used with his children.

Moreover, Stylistics needs to be highlighted as being the approach adopted in investigating the lexico-semantic features in *Ulysses*. Stylistics is considered a product of the 20th century, it plays a key role in interpreting literary works (Bradford, 2005). Stylistics concerns itself with studying aspects of language variation (Crystal & Davy, 1969). When paging literature, researchers can find a

plethora of definitions of the term 'stylistics', varying in accordance with the gamut of study. According to Widdowson (1975), stylistics is the study of literary discourse from a linguistic angle. Therefore, it couples both disciplines together: literary texts are approached from a linguistic perspective. Clearly articulated, Widdowson (1975, p.3) averred that "by 'stylistics' I mean the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation, and I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand, and linguistics, on the other, is that it is essentially a means of linking the two". He then stresses the ability of stylistics to provide a linkage between linguistics and literary criticism.

Leech and Short (2007) claimed that stylistics investigates the rapport between the writer's artistry and the way how it is conveyed through language. In addition, the two scholars emphasized that stylistics scrutinizes the relationship between the underlying meanings of a text and the set of linguistic characteristics by which these meanings are expressed. These linguistic characteristics are termed as 'markers' or 'features'. The latter are selected depending on a literary reason and a linguistic one. They imply that the researcher should be aware and vigilant when reading the passage under investigation. According to Leech and Short (2007), the aforementioned features are catalogued in a checklist and classified into four overlapping categories. These are lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and context and cohesion.

This paper is mainly concerned with the elaboration of lexical and semantic features. Leech and Short (2007) represent the abovementioned categories as a set of questions, and it is up to the analyst to answer these questions depending on the availability of these features in the text. The content of Leech and Short's Checklist (2007) is summarized in the following table:

Table1 : Leech & Short Checklist

Main Category	Sub-category
A. Lexical Categories	1. General 2. Nouns 3. Adjectives 4.Verbs 5. Adverbs
B. Grammatical categories	1. Sentence Types 2. Sentence Complexity 3. Clause Types 4. Clause Structure 5. Noun Phrases 6. Verb Phrases 7. Other Phrase Types 8. Word Classes 9. General
C. Figures of Speech	1. Grammatical and Lexical Schemes 2. Phonological Schemes 3. Tropes
D. Cohesion and Context	1. Cohesion 2. Context

Source: (Leech & Short, 2007, p .79)

Another key category from the aforementioned checklist with which this research is concerned is the use of figures of speech. According to Cuddon (2013), figurative language makes use of figures of speech such like metaphor, alliteration

and irony. It bears all kinds of devices that are semantically or grammatically unusual (Wales, 2011).

Figures of speech represent a collective term in rhetoric covering all kinds of striking or unusual configurations of words or phrases. The variation can touch all units and layers of the linguistic system (graphic, phonological, morphological. syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic patterns) (Bussmann, 2006). They are sub-branched into two, schemes and tropes.

Leech and Short's checklist allocates an independent category to figures of speech focusing on the abovementioned partition that is schemes and tropes. Providing some examples for each partition, the two scholars state the following points to be focused on. The first point concerns tropes whether there are any fragrant violations of or departures from the conventional linguistic code; for instance, neologisms, deviant lexical collocations, and semantic, syntactic, phonological, or graphological deviations. These types of deviations are quintessential in that they may serve as clues for interpretations associated with traditional poetic figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox and irony. The occurrence of such tropes evokes a special interpretation (e.g. metaphors can be studied according to their classes as personifying, animising, concretising, synaesthetic, etc.). Because of its firm relationship with metaphor, simile may also be considered here. Simile gives rise to the notion of semantic fields, thus the analyst is also required to pay attention to the various dissimilar related fields through simile. Here is a brief survey of the main traditional tropes.

First, metaphor is according to Cuddon (2013) a basic figure of speech in poetry and prose; it represents an implicit or a covert comparison. Linguists working within the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science have pointed out how central and important metaphors are in the human language. Wales (2011) maintains that metaphor is principally based on similitude. That stands for an implicit comparison between two objects.

Metaphor is characterized by what is termed as transference of meaning (Benzoukh, 2016). When words do not have their primary or literal senses, they are rather associated with a figurative meaning. Metaphoricity is a way of bringing together entities that are seemingly divergent for the purpose of finding out similarities and differences. It is a resource of the individual imagination that is blatant more intensely and finely in the artist's craft (Schwarz, 1987).

 According to Short (2013, p.159), metaphors establish different types of semantic connections; these are termed as notional classes which are as follows:
a) Concrete metaphors which give concrete attributes to abstraction; for instance, 'the pain of separation'.
b) Animistic metaphors which attribute animate characteristics to inanimate; for instance, 'angry sky'.

c) Humanizing metaphors (anthropomorphic) which give humanistic qualities to non-human such as saying: 'the laughing valley'.

d) Synaesthetic metaphors which transfer attributes related to senses from one domain to another; for example, 'a warm colour': warm is related to the tactile domain, and colour is visual.

Second, metonymy is derived from Greek and it refers to 'name change' (Wales, 2011, p. 267). It is intrinsically less striking than metaphor because it does not generate new connections between words. It rather calls into play words that are already related; for example, 'crown' refers to 'monarch' and 'the press' to 'newspapers' and so on. These relations between words are not based on identification, but on association connecting the two concepts which these meanings represent (Galperin, 1977).

Third, irony is both a linguistic and cognitive device; it is principally used creating a gap between what is said and what is meant. Readers engage in a cognitive process to be able to recognize the gap between what is anticipated and what is perceived. As one of the most important tropes or figures of speech, irony has been a subject of debate and discussion by all those who are interested in rhetoric (Gibbs & Colston, 2007).

The previously cited tropes are according to Leech and Short a matter of deviations, principally semantic and lexical ones. Semantic deviations can be termed as relations whose meanings represent a kind of paradox, incompatibility and inconsistency. For example, metaphors fall into this sort of deviation. Lexical deviation is epitomized in the ingenuity of poets and writers who invent new words which have never existed before. This is usually known as neologism. Also, lexical deviations can be generated when it comes to using words that are related to for example one variety of English and employing them with another variety which they do not belong to (Short, 2013).

3. Methodology

A stylistic analysis of *Ulysses* is made in order to unveil the various lexical and semantic features characterizing it. The present research is approached stylistically. Stylistic analysis gives an evaluative and objective account of a text, specifying its purpose and style, and arrives at the meaning through a set of techniques drawn from linguistics. The application of linguistic methods is favoured since it generally leads to a deeper and more far-reaching understanding of many aspects of literary passages.

The study is descriptive and analytical because various lexical and semantic features are to be described and illustrated by examples. Tavakoli (2012) stated that "a descriptive method in descriptive research is to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyze, and interpret the entities and the events that constitute their various fields of inquiry" (p.160). The research is qualitative since it relies on verbal description using qualities and attributes rather than numerical data.

In this study, the two researchers selected random quotes of passages from the novel of the modernist writer James Joyce that is *Ulysses*. The latter is an epic novel; it records the events of one day (June 16th, 1904) of the main characters who are Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom's wife.

Data analysis is made by means of Leech and Short's checklist (2007). The checklist classifies the linguistic features or markers into four categories. These are lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and context and cohesion

According to the two scholars, it is such a challenging task to map out the various linguistic features relying solely on intuitions. This is why it is advisable to use "a checklist of potential style markers […] so that a reader may carry out a linguistic survey of the text, searching for significant features" (Leech & Short, 2007, p.56). Leech & Short continued to claim that this checklist seeks to make the stylistic analysis of a text more systemic in that it is based on selection since some studies tend to focus on just one feature as opposed to other analyses which treat various features.

4. Analysis

Ulysses , a parallel to the Odyssey a Greek Epic written by Homer , in which James Joyce celebrates the surge of events using a wide array of styles. The novel consists of eighteen episodes each named in accordance with the Odyssey. Hence, *Ulysses* 'chapters bear Greek names such like *Telemachus*, Nestor, Proteus…

4.1 Investigating the Lexical Features

The two researchers investigated the opening passage of *Ulysses* to launch the analysis of the lexical features according to Leech and Short's checklist. The Lexical features compromise studying general vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The researchers followed a procedure beginning by giving a general impression about the passage. After that, they moved to highlighting the various features operating on a selective basis turning the readers' attention to the momentous stylistic features in relation to the literary function of the passage depending on the context which incubates these features.

4.1.1 Nouns

The first subcategory to be analyzed is nouns. A key distinction is the concreteness and the abstraction of nouns. In this passage, concrete nouns are widely used to account for this description. Joyce uses concrete nouns to congregate the various elements providing a precise description marked by abundant details. Starting with spatial description, Joyce locates the reader in the proper space of the scene, having recourse to "stair head", "tower", "stairs", "gun rest", "land", "mountains", and "staircase" (*Ulysses*, p.2).

Concrete nouns are also used to portray the characters' physical appearance referring to the different parts of the body such as face, head, arms, eyes, body and teeth. Joyce uses concrete nouns to give details about events and

characters' actions; in this passage, a host of concrete nouns are utilized to describe Buck Mulligan's shaving process bowl, lather, razor and mirror. Abstract nouns are also employed, but concrete ones outnumber them; for instance, the word "morning" (*Ulysses*, p.2) is used so as to designate the time-place frame of the scene.

Moving to the proper names, the novel reveals that Joyce represents substance in his use of proper names. Joyce's choice of his characters' names denotes drawing religious and cultural backgrounds. The protagonist of *Telemachiad* episodes, Stephen Dedalus, whose name is previously used in A *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, has a significant reference and carries the writer's identity; his name stems from the Greek language and culture and Christianity as well.

In Christianity, Stephen's first name is associated with St. Stephen the martyr who was stoned to death by a mob because he claimed that he saw God manifesting in the heavens (Fargnoli & Gillepsie, 1996). St. Stephen was judged unfairly; this fact applies to Stephen in *Ulysses* since as an artist, Stephen feels alienated, oppressed and imprisoned by external forces which are Catholicism and societal constraints.

4.1.2 Adjectives

The second subcategory in Leech and Short's framework is the use of adjectives. Adjectives prevail the scene; they are frequent and used for different purposes according to the context in which they occur. In this passage, Joyce's choice of adjectives is also smart and accurate in that his choice goes in accordance with the various intentions and personality traits of his characters. Joyce opens up the chapter with a succession of adjectives like "stately" and "plump" (*Ulysses*, p.2) to describe Buck Mulligan.

Joyce uses physical adjectives to describe his characters' physical appearance: "plump", "pale", "white teeth […] with gold points", "untonsured hair", and "engirdled dressing gown", "Untonsured" and "ungirdeled" (*Ulysses*, p.2) are adjectives applied to portray Mulligan and belong to priests. Mulligan is in a trial to imitate priests' actions and traditions in Catholicism. Priests' hair is generally tonsured. Psychological adjectives are also used to describe the mental state of characters: "Stephen is displeased and sleepy". In the same line, Mulligan describes Stephen as being "fearful Jesuit" (*Ulysses*, p.2): fearful in the context of the passage is attached with "Jesuit" that stands for a group of members of the Christian society that are widely known for their exactitude and intransigent scientific spirit.

4.1.3 Verbs

The third sub-category to be analyzed is verbs. In his description, Joyce opts for dynamic verbs to show how actions take place. These verbs are also an important indicator for a detailed description adding a dimension of vividness.

They are usually related to movement such as "came" and "mounted" (*Ulysses*, p.2).

Verbs vary in what concerns transitivity; there are transitive and intransitive ones. Transitive verbs include "held the bowel", "mounted the round gun rest", "blessed the tower", "made rapid crosses", "covered the bowl", "shut your eyes", "gave a long low whistle of call", and "switch off the current" (*Ulysses*, p.2).

4.1.4 Adverbs

Adverbs are employed to fulfill certain semantic functions. In the first chapter as a whole, Joyce opts for a wide range of adverbs. In this passage, most of them are adjuncts of manner by means of single words with the suffix '-ly' modifying the characters' actions: "gently", "coarsely", "solemnly", "smartly", "sternly", "gravely", "coldly", "briskly", "nicely" and even without '–ly' such as "aloft" (*Ulysses*, p.2).

There are also adverbs of place linked with verbs to give an effect of movement: "came from", "come up", "came forward", "bent towards", "peeped under", "peered up" and "faced about" (*Ulysses*, p.2). Adjunct propositional phrases are also used: "in the air" and "in a preacher's tone" (*Ulysses*, p.2).

4.1.5 General Vocabulary

The last lexical sub-category to be investigated is the use general vocabulary. In the chosen passage, it is noticed that the author uses colloquialism which is presented in slangs, abbreviations and idioms. Colloquialism is dominant throughout the whole novel. Mulligan scrawling "at the lather on his razorblade," he expresses an obscure imprecation: "— Scutter! He cried thickly." (*Ulysses*, p.7). In Dublin, as a slang, "scutter" is "a dismissive term; it means a watery stool." (Kiberd, 1992, p.943).

Mulligan also uses the expression "lend us a loan of your noserag to clean my razor" (*Ulysses*, p.7). 'Lend us a loan of something' is a colloquial expression used by Dubliners. A little later, the dialogue continues between Stephen and Buck Mulligan; Mulligan is suggesting charitable offers on Stephen. He proposes to give him some clothes because Stephen looks in a miserable state after his mother's death. Mulligan uses a British slang when saying:

   "Ah, poor dogsbody! He said in a kind voice. I must give you a shirt and a few noserags. How are the secondhand breeks?
   — They fit well enough, Stephen answered." (*Ulysses*, p.8)

The word "dogsbody" is colloquial; it refers to a person who does odd jobs. It may signify a deeper sense since the dog's epithet in Celtic Mythology is "Guard the Secret". This term applies to Stephen since he is seen as secretive (Gifford, 1992, p.15). Mulligan uses the word "breeks" when he utters "secondhand breeks" (dialectical for breeches, britches, trousers and pants) that

he has somehow obtained for Stephen. "Breeks" is used as a slang to refer to trousers.

4.2 Investigating the Semantic Features

Carrying on the procedure of analysis using Leech and Short's checklist (2007), the following section treats the semantic features in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Leech and Short's checklist does not encapsulate the semantic features as an autonomous category on the grounds that they are deducible out of the interwoven categories. In the novel, it is remarked that Joyce departs deliberately from the norms of the language and uses words far away from their literal meaning, providing them with a new figurative meaning.

4.2.1 Metaphors

As a starting point, metaphors are used in *Ulysses* to express different meanings. Relying on the notion of mapping that necessitates the presence of two domains, metaphors are studied and analyzed. In Episode Two, *Nestor*, Stephen holds a conversation with Mr. Deasy, in which the latter is claiming that the former was not born to be a teacher; then, Stephen argues that he is a mere learner and that learning is an unstoppable, a never-ending process since life keeps on teaching us:

-I foresee, Mr Deasy said, that you will not remain here very long at this work. You were not born to be a teacher, I think. Perhaps I am wrong.
-A learner rather, Stephen said.
And here what will you learn more?
Mr Deasy shook his head.
-Who knows? He said. To learn one must be humble. But life is the great teacher. (*Ulysses*, p. 71)

In this quote, the metaphor is one-correspondence because there is only one correspondence between the source and target domains. Life is compared with a great teacher since the two share the same characteristic of delivering lessons. Classifying this metaphor according to the previously mentioned classes as set by Leech and Short in their checklist, it would fall in the concreting class since life is an abstract concept and being a teacher is a tangible profession. Relating this to the context, it is affirmative to the fact that Stephen exemplifies an educated character and interprets his unceasing aspiration to learn more and acquire new knowledge every day as he lives.

4.2.2 Metonymy

Metonymy is also opted for in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In Episode Three, *Proteus*, Joyce mentions the fleshpot of Egypt to mean the food of Egypt: "Aha, Eating your groatworth of mou encivet, fleshpots of Egypt, elbowed by belching cabmen" (*Ulysses*, p.84).

In this excerpt, Joyce uses the expression "fleshpots of Egypt" that stands for a type of meat historically prepared in Egypt. It is mentioned here as a representative of all sorts of tasteful food of Egypt. The author uses the specific

food fleshpots to refer to all delicious foods in this country. Consequently, this kind of metonymy illustrates the favourite food of Egypt and attracts people to know more about its culture.

4.2.3 Neologism

In Leech and Short's checklist, neologism is categorized as a subcategory of figures of speech. It is considered from a semantic angle rather than a lexical one. *Ulysses* is characterized by the use of innovative language; Joyce coined new unique words that had never been into use before, leaving his imprint, enriching the English store and defying readers to interpret and decode his underlying messages.

Joyce's ingenuity in paralleling *Ulysses* with its prototype *The Odyssey* is not only by adopting themes and characters, but also by establishing a linguistic link between the two. The most striking set of neologisms in *Ulysses* are unusual compounds composed following the rules of compounding. To begin with, noun compounds follow a 'Noun+ Noun' pattern (frequently common nouns), but in some cases this pattern can bear a 'Noun+Pronoun' as in "babemaries" (p.296), "Hesouls" (p.480), "shesouls" (p.480), "littlejohn" (p.414), "Besteglinton" (p.436), "Bronzelydia" (p.550), "Minagold" (p.550), "Kennygiggles" (p.558), "Shebronze" (p.570), and "bensoulbenjamin" (p.580).

Joyce also employs a certain grammatical type of compounding (Antecedent+Relative Pronoun) which is rarely opted for as in "Bloowho" (p.553), "Bloowhose" (p.557) and "Bloohimwhom" (p.566). These compounds distinguish Joyce's style; they are termed as portmanteau words in *Ulysses*.

4.2.4 Irony

Irony is at the core of *Ulysses* that is written with an ironical tone. Joyce waves his ideas using irony to transmit his thoughts. Ironies are used concentratedly in *Telemachus*, *Eumaeus* and *Penelope* episodes.

Local ironies are the most pervasive ones which function principally on the level of a word, a phrase, a sentence or a paragraph. In the first episode, *Telemachus*, Buck Mulligan is nastily parodying the Catholic Mass; he castigates Stephen and Catholicism. *Telemachus* is woven relying on an ironic context; the first two words describing Buck Mulligan, "stately" and "plump" (*Ulysses*, p.2), are used ironically. Buck Mulligan views himself as stately, but not as plump. The adjective "Stately" bears another meaning relying on the context of *Telemachus*; it hints to Mulligan as being a collaborator with the state contradicting his pretentions to be radical: his radicalism is a mere affectation.

Another sound ironical example is related to the relationship between Stephen and Buck Mulligan. Stephen perceives Buck Mulligan as a usurper; in the novel the latter is described as a character that restricts the former's actions and robs his freedom (besides the other masters in Ireland, the Catholic Church and the English Imperialism Stephen mentioned in Episode One *Telemachus*). The passage starts with the appearance of Buck Mulligan first and then Stephen; this

affirms the former's dominance. Stephen is described as displeasant and sleepy while he is unhappy and scared of his companionship with Mulligan in the Martello tower.

5. CONCLUSION

Analyzing the lexico-semantic features in *Ulysses* revealed that there are certain distinctive and significant characteristics depicting *Ulysses* and marking Joyce's style. Motives stimulating the writer to use these features vary. Concerning the lexical features that are related to the choice of words, it is noticed that Joyce is smart in his choice in that it is serviceable to his characters' traits. Proper names in *Ulysses* are used to symbolize different religious and cultural personalities from the real world of the author and drawn from his proper background knowledge. Shifting to the use of colloquial words and expressions, Joyce prefers to make the flow of his novels seem natural and spontaneous. Besides, he opts for an informal register using slangs and idioms to add a species of particularity and distinctiveness as he inserts some Irish expressions. Furthermore, metaphors are used to convey vivid descriptions beyond the literal meanings in a trial to catch the readers' eyes and activate their imagination.

Joyce's lexico-semantic choices, overall linguistic project, plot, characters and various narrative techniques are all interrelated as a web. Stated differently, they are serviceable to each other. Joyce's lexico-semantic choice does not occur on a random basis, but it rather helps in the understanding of the whole novel. The diversity of lexical and semantic features stresses that *Ulysses* is an elaborate rhetorical experiment.

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